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THE POSITION

OF

LIBERAL THEOLOGY

A Friendly Examination of the Bishop of Zanzibar's Open Letter entitled 'The Christ and His Critics'

BY

WILLIAM SANDAY, D.D., LL.D., LITT.D.
Canon of Christ Church, Oxford
Hon. Fellow of Exeter College
Fellow of the British Academy; Hon. Chaplain to the King

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THE POSITION OF LIBERAL THEOLOGY

I MAY be allowed to say that I have followed the career of the Bishop of Zanzibar with continuous interest and in many ways with genuine admiration. I have an affectionate remembrance of him as a theological pupil of my own, I suppose about the years 1891–2. I see that he refers to this, delicately and reticently, on p. 63 of his book, without mentioning names, and so far as he has mentioned me by name I have no reason to complain. Since his consecration I have heard him speak on missionary platforms, and have been much impressed by his unusual elevation and fervid eloquence, which had about it the ring of sincerity and devotion. Only just before his book came into my hands I had been reading his first address at the Anglo-Catholic Congress, and found it thoroughly pleasant and amiable.

I

And yet I cannot help regretting that this book should ever have been written. I am afraid that it will not contribute to the welfare of the body politic, but rather the reverse.

It is too easy to see how it came to be written.

A colonial bishop, with his see on an island, is surrounded with somewhat exceptional temptations. He has a sense and experience of power out of proportion to his feeling of responsibility. He is not subject to the salutary, if thwarting, restraints of an English diocesan. His diocese is not just a section of the English Church in all its manifold variety. His clergy are for the most part of one way of thinking, and where that way of thinking happens to include a high view of episcopacy he is accustomed to make his own will prevail. In the meantime he is much cut off from his intellectual and social equals, and the advice that he receives will be apt to be the echo of himself.

I am afraid that in this description I am rather constructing the diocese of Zanzibar from my inner consciousness; but I suspect that I am not so very far wrong. An English bishop will necessarily be in a very different position. He will have to represent before the world all parties in the Church, and to hold himself more or less responsible for them. I should doubt if the Bishop of Zanzibar has any substantial number of liberals among his clergy; it is evident that he would not encourage them; still less would he consider that he himself represents them. They would be something alien to him from outside, and he would feel free to deal with them as aliens.

It is sufficiently clear that this is the spirit in which the Bishop of Zanzibar has written. And

then we must add to this that he is also naturally single-minded and impetuous. He sees his object straight before him, and does not much look to see what is on his right or on his left.

I doubt if the Bishop can have any idea how his own words will strike either the average bishop or the average lay Englishman.

> 'It is, so far as I can see at the moment, my evident duty to dissociate myself in this matter from the Metropolitan and Synod of Canterbury. Otherwise I shall remain morally responsible for their approval of liberalism, approval shown in the consecration of Dr. Henson, and his subsequent reception into the synod without protest, as also in the indulgence extended to teachers of the type of Dr. Latimer Jackson, Canon Streeter, and some of our professors.
>
> Protests are futile. I did my best in my "Open Letter to the Bishop of St. Albans" in 1913. Dr. Jackson's *Eschatology of Jesus* was mentioned to the Provincial Synod by the Bishop of London in full session. With what result? The bishops merely reiterated a resolution under which liberalism in priests and prelates had been before fruitlessly condemned. As a set-off to this, Mr. Streeter, of *Foundations* fame, was made a Canon of Hereford, and Dr. Henson consecrated a bishop. I protested against Mr. Streeter's promotion. I did all that is ecclesiastically possible to force the metropolitan of Hereford and Zanzibar dioceses to face the situation. But to no purpose.
>
> When the Kikuyu decision came out in 1915 I gave notice to the archbishop that in the Lambeth Conference I should appeal against it and,

if no senior bishop acted, should also move a resolution in this matter of liberalism.

When Dr. Henson was consecrated I at once took action that to me seemed to require the interference of the bishops in the Lambeth Conference. The only result was a warning that unless I retraced my action it might be impossible, for technical reasons, to invite me to the conference. And I received no support at home' (p. 143 f.).

Is it strange if this should appear, from the ordinary English point of view, as at once impetuous and irresponsible? And is it not at least fair to infer that there are no Dr. Hensons or Canon Streeters or Dr. Latimer Jacksons, for whom the Bishop has to feel in some sense responsible in the diocese of Zanzibar? If there were such, their fate would be quite sufficiently indicated by the following:

'If I found a teacher in our diocese who so "accommodated" his doctrine to his audience as to use phrases that implied to the learned the exact contrary of what they meant to the simple, he would either amend his methods or cease to teach' (p. 169).

An English bishop assumes that all the three regular parties have a right to exist. Dr. Weston assumes that one at least has no *locus standi* in the Church of England at all.

II

This is really the main tenor of the whole book. Its motto might be, quite shortly, *Non licet esse vobis.*

This explains another fact, which I confess has also surprised me. The Bishop repeatedly marshals his evidence against the liberals. He sometimes does so with a copious use of italics (as for instance on pp. 106–110) to call attention to points of difference. I have looked rather carefully at these italics, but with an opposite result. What surprises me is not so much the amount of difference which they reveal as the amount of agreement. Allowing for the fundamental differences of premisses and of method, I am surprised and I should naturally say encouraged by the amount of substantial coincidence. Starting from points of the compass that are apparently remote, the two parties, nevertheless, seem to meet in the middle. No doubt this is due to the estimate that one puts respectively upon difference and agreement. I perhaps exaggerate the one, but I am pretty sure that Dr. Weston exaggerates the other.

The unfortunate part of it is that in stating his case against liberalism Dr. Weston continually overstates it. He is constantly practising the *reductio ad horribile.* He first paraphrases his opponent's case so as to bring out what he believes to be the latent mischief concealed in it, and then

he treats his own paraphrase as if it were the original position. Instead of scrupulously avoiding the use of invidious language, he rather goes out of his way to indulge in it. There are some quite serious examples of this, which I will not quote because I do not wish to aggravate the situation but rather to mitigate it.[1] The procedure is one that is much to be deprecated.

If I am asked to explain how these things came about, once more I find myself thrown back on the isolation and solitude of a diocese like Zanzibar. The Bishop sits down to a lengthy argument; he gets absorbed in it; and then *vires adquirit eundo*. He has no judicious friend at his side to point out to him how this particular mode of presenting his case will appear to the world at large. It is pathetic, but only too intelligible.

There is another effect of this same isolation to which I must come back before I have done. But I will leave this for the present in order to grapple or try to grapple with what I feel to be at once the greatest and the most difficult portion of my task—the attempt to explain the two sides to each other.

III

I am quite ready to think that this may be beyond my powers. And yet I will try what I can

[1] If my old pupil desires to see what I mean, I would ask him to look at p. 120, and at a phrase which I need not indicate on p. 148.

do, because even if only a little should be gained it will be worth while.

It will be necessary to go back farther and to go down deeper. It will, perhaps, not be so difficult to help the liberal to understand the high-churchman as to help the high-churchman to understand the liberal. So much will have to be set forth in some detail that will seem wide of the mark and like beating the air. It is largely a question of presuppositions, and the presuppositions of the liberal are alien to his opponent's modes of thought. They are concerned with processes in which he is not interested.

But before we come to these it will be well, first, to have a clear understanding as to the attitude of mind in which the whole question is to be approached.

Mental Attitude.—I would sum up this in the familiar words of our Lord: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged'. What we are attempting is an explanation, and not an indictment. It is not an indictment of either side. I shall probably have to ask both sides for a little patience. I may have to ask both in turn to lend their attention to things that do not naturally interest them. And, in any case, I shall ask them to bear in mind the spirit of our Lord's words: not, that is, to start from a posture of hostility, but to allow the sympathies to be at least neutral; to let the wish to understand take precedence for the moment of the wish to

attack or condemn. From the exercise of so much self-restraint each of the two sides will benefit in its turn; it will secure for its own case a patient hearing.

Loyalty.—In reading the abridged Newspaper report of the recent Anglo-Catholic Conference I could not help asking myself from time to time what was the real source of all the enthusiasm: one might almost say in other words, what was the real strength of the party gathering. It was fair to believe that it was something laudable. What was the essence or secret of the cause which the party stood for? Other, minor, reasons might be alleged for it; but the major reason, I imagine, was the feeling of loyalty towards our Lord's Person and the Society which He founded. There was something in that really to stir enthusiasm.

It would certainly not have been a legitimate inference that there would be no such feeling of loyalty in a similar gathering of the liberal party. There is, I feel sure, among liberals a very strong feeling of attachment to the Person of our Lord, though in the case of the Church there are too many counter influences and associations at work to let that supply exactly a central motive for enthusiasm.[1]

[1] Some of us, when 'the Church' is quoted to us, find it hard to get out of our minds Canossa and The Inquisition, and what is called 'clericalism' and the like. The 'congregation of faithful men [and women] dispersed throughout the world' is a very different matter.

Truth.—If we desired to express in the most general terms the corresponding central motive of the liberal party, the sense of possessing which would rouse it to a like enthusiasm, we should probably be right if we were to single out *Truth.* Both parties no doubt believe themselves to be in possession of truth. But I believe that this means more for the liberal than it does for the high-churchman. For him it holds a place corresponding rather to that of 'the Church' in the high-church scheme. The high-churchman's devotion to truth is rather perhaps a particular form of loyalty; it is an ecclesiastical virtue; it means assent to the Church's creed. The liberal notion of Truth is something wider. It is a single, inter-related system, embracing all departments of human knowledge. The same measure, with appropriate distinctions, is applied to all. Religion is not separated off from the rest. The claims of the spirit are duly recognized and duly weighed.

Reality.—What Truth is in matters of high and elaborate calculation that the craving for Reality is in matters of lower and less elaborate calculation. That, too, is characteristic of our time. It made itself felt in a special degree during the War. Men were thrown together, and they began to compare notes, and the stronger characters took a lead. It was a particularly fine type that came to the front in this way. It found its first and most conspicuous expression in the book entitled *A Student in Arms,*

the author of which, Donald Hankey, an Oxford man, lost his life in the second year of the War, but not before a definite set of ideas had begun to crystallize round him. It was essentially a lay religion; the religion of the average man; of the better sort of fighting man; a soldier's religion. It was at once a simplification and an intensification of the religion of the Churches. It took for its watchword this call for 'reality'. In other words, it reflected an intense conviction—a conviction which concentrated itself upon essential points, and which shed off the rest, strengthening and deepening its grasp upon what it held by the very process of concentration.

Another book which helped to spread the doctrine was the joint volume *Faith or Fear?* contributed by a group of men who were like-minded. The movement—for it was really a movement—was not in the first instance of a party character, for it professedly included men and women of all schools of thought, though under the name of the 'Anglican Fellowship' it sprang from the Church of England, and may be taken as a very good representative product of that Society. At the same time the tendency was to gravitate towards the liberal side. Both the books that have been mentioned gave distinct expression to liberal ideas. They emphasized what liberals emphasize; and treated as open questions what liberals regard as open. This was by a process of natural selection. And it reacted

upon the party as a whole. It helped to give the sense of a common cause and a definite aim, which was appropriately summed up in the call for Reality.

Authority.—As a rule the friends of the Bishop of Zanzibar bring under the head of *Authority* much for which liberals would rather rely upon the general idea of Truth. But it has quite lately been brought home to me that they are beginning to see the objections to this position and are beginning to approach more nearly to that of their opponents. In a recent pamphlet, the Rev. G. H. Tremenheere, Vicar of St. Frideswide's, Oxford, writing from the same point of view as the Bishop, makes an admission which goes to the root of the difference. Distinguishing rightly between authority in matters of belief and in matters of practice he observes that

> 'In the two spheres the word is, or should be, used in totally different senses. *To order a person to believe this, or not to believe that, is as unmeaning a phrase as to speak of a blue sound.* Authority in regard to belief has a different meaning, yet one quite as familiar. We speak of a person being an authority on history, an authority on philosophy, meaning that he knows much about the subject, and can be trusted to teach accurately on it'. *Critics, Creeds and Conscience* (The Faith Press, 1920, p. 5).

I have printed the most important words in italics. Those which follow are not quite adequate; but they are sufficiently supplemented on the next page:

> 'No doubt any authority must be prepared to

> justify its teachings at the bar of reason; i. e., to show that they are not contrary to sound reason, which would include sound criticism'.

In other words, the *ultimate criterion* is the same as that of Truth. By this criterion every authority and the degree of weight attaching to it is to be tested. I do not doubt that on this basis a complete understanding on the two sides may be reached. The subject will come up again when we have to speak of the Creeds and of the part which they play in the formation of belief.

The Growth of Scientific Exegesis, History and Criticism.—The Growthof Scientific Exegesis, History and Criticism has been on the whole a contribution of liberalism. All parties contributed something. The movement was international, with Germany for its centre; and an English landmark was the visit of Dr. Pusey to that country in 1825–7. The conservatives brought to bear an element of sound philology and learning, such as that represented especially by Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890). But the progressive element came from men like Heinrich Ewald (1803–1875), De Wette (1750–1849) and Dillmann (1823–1894). Of these the most important in connexion with this country was Ewald, who claimed as pupils both Cheyne and Robertson Smith. In France there was the all-round scholarship and judicious temper of the Alsatian Eduard Reuss (1804–1891). This country was a little behindhand, and the first marked advance was from the side of

the New Testament and the great Cambridge trio (Lightfoot, 1828–1889; Hort, 1828–1892; Westcott, 1825–1901), who began to make their activity felt from the early sixties. Another visit to Germany supplies another landmark, when—also in the sixties—Dr. Cheyne went over to Göttingen to study under Ewald. An independent beginning was made in North Britain with A. B. Davidson[1] (1831–1902) and W. Robertson Smith (1846–1894). The last named, like Edwin Hatch (1835–1889), had his career cut short before his time, but exercised a great influence. Those whom I have just mentioned may be regarded as the real builders. But it was also a fact of no slight importance when the high-church party widened its range, so as especially to include the influence of the Old Testament scholars, by the publication of *Lux Mundi* in 1889. From that time onwards there have been shades of individual opinion, but Biblical studies may be said to have been in the main solid; all parties have joined in them in

[1] Dr. Driver, in *D.N.B.*, thus sums up Davidson's work on O.T.: 'Davidson taught his pupils to realize its *historical* significance, to understand what its different writings meant to those who first heard them uttered, or read them, to trace the historical progress of religious ideas, to cultivate, in a word *historical* exegesis' . . . 'Davidson initiated in this country that *historical* view of O.T. which was afterwards more fully developed by his pupil William Robertson Smith, and is now generally accepted among Scholars' . . . 'He was equally alive to the historical and the religious importance of O.T.; and he was the first leader of thought in this country who taught successfully the reality of both.'

friendly and open rivalry. But the leading influences came from Cheyne (in his best period) and Driver, whose work was done once for all and never needed to be undone. This is the great solid nucleus which is being admirably extended by the scholars of the present day (Old Testament as well as New, but especially Old).

It is hardly likely that the Bishop, in the remote diocese of Zanzibar, should have been able to keep pace with all these studies, or should quite have been able to appreciate how much of them is beyond the reach of challenge.

Miracles.—No doubt the question of Miracles is beyond the circle of general agreement and falls rather in the No Man's Land which is supposed to be given over to innovation.

For me the question is one of definition. I believe that the time has come when the definition of Miracle ought to be amended. There is no reason in the nature of things why the idea of miracle should carry with it the implication of the breach or suspension of the order of nature. Etymologically, the word means no more than a 'wonder' or 'extraordinary event'; and to that meaning—even to the extreme limit of that which is wonderful or extraordinary, short of a positive breach of the natural order—there is no exception to be taken. I quite believe that 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of' in most philosophies. I should be perfectly ready to leave room for these,

so long as they did not violate any of the assured uniformities of nature. I draw the line at them.

At the same time I have no wish to evade my responsibilities. I do not regard myself as denying miracles, though I do not believe that certain alleged events happened exactly as they are described. If this is to deny miracles, I will save time by pleading 'guilty'.

The order of nature is God's order; and the idea that the hand of God is specially to be seen in the breach of that order seems to me to be a crude idea, belonging to a phase of thought that in all secular affairs has long been outgrown. The secular historian, dealing with the events of the past, assumes that the surrounding external conditions were the same as those which we see about us to-day. Are we not to make that assumption for the particular century that comes first in the series of Christian centuries? We do, indeed, believe that just at that date a unique Cause was present in the world. But the more completely we believe this, and the more closely we associate that Cause with the Author and Governor of the universe, the more sure we shall be that He would observe the conditions laid down by the Father of Lights with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.

The decisive moment came for me when I—almost suddenly—became convinced that the history of the conception of Miracle could be written and its growth through the ages traced, without invoking

any real suspension of the laws of nature, but by the transitory complex of ideas and language in which the spiritual phenomena of the time had come to be described.

Is it not one of the most obvious lessons of history that in seeking to do greater honour to Him who is at once Son of God and Son of Man, the Christian world has only too often taken away from His honour instead of adding to it? And was it not with reference to the danger of doing this that our Lord gave utterance to that most pathetic saying of His, 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me'. He knew that there would be a temptation to explain away whatever seemed paradoxical among His sayings, and not to leave it simply as it stood.

When St. Paul desired to single out the most characteristic qualities of the Christ, did he not say 'I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ?' And is it not at once a singular confirmation of this and singularly confirmed by it, that our Lord Himself issued the invitation: 'Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart?'

The Supernatural. I have taken the liberty of dividing a phrase which in the Bishop of Zanzibar's book and elsewhere is repeatedly found in combination, 'miracle and the supernatural', where the latter half is just a synonym and equivalent for the former. I prefer to regard the two words ('miracle' of course being taken in its ordinary sense) as

independent of each other and standing upon a different footing. I see that in doing so I have the support of Baron F. von Hügel in an address recently delivered to junior members of the University of Oxford. At the outset of the paper, which is entitled 'Christianity and the Supernatural', reference is made to a controversy between Bossuet and Fénelon concerning the spiritual life:

> 'Fénelon, towards the end, insisted against Bossuet (who found downright miracle in the more advanced states of prayer and of self-surrender) that the entire spiritual life, from its rudimentary beginnings up to its very highest grades and developments, was for him, Fénelon, essentially and increasingly supernatural, but at no point essentially miraculous.'

I would very heartily accept and endorse this distinction, and, indeed, the whole teaching of the address. The reality of the Supernatural in this sense is a point of the first importance to me. By 'the supernatural' I mean due to the working of the Holy Spirit.

Roughly speaking I would say that there are three lines of argument for the reality of the supernatural in this sense: (1) from the nature of the larger movements in the history of religion; (2) from a study of the special phenomena presented by the Bible and in particular by the apostolic epistles; and (3) from the experiences of the religious life.

(1) The study of Comparative Religions has had the effect of enabling us to map out with much greater clearness the lines of gradual development which have led upwards from the lower stages of religion to the higher. Biblical religion takes the lead. Its teaching stands out with a force and elevation which it does not share with any other. And yet there are parallelisms which show that the Power that guides the destinies of men was working on a plan. The moralizing of religion which finds such magnificent expression in the Hebrew prophets Amos, Micah, Isaiah has its counterpart in Greece in a movement that was going on very much about the same time. In this respect Hesiod marks an advance upon Homer. In him is seen a new demand for righteousness. The Homeric deities had been friends or foes, helpful or hurtful. But they were moved by caprice and were morally indifferent. It was a new thing to look to the gods for the righting of wrong. The conception of Zeus embodies much of a real Providence. With the introduction of the worship of Dionysus in the eighth century there began a deepening of Greek religion. The more emotional and imaginative side of religion was stirred, and attention came to be more and more directed to the life beyond the grave. The mystery cults were developed, and with the Orphic movement of the sixth century there came in a doctrine of judgement after death with rewards and punishments in which Hellenic religion was even in advance of

Hebraic, and made a permanent contribution to religious thought. In the meantime the special gifts of the Greeks made themselves felt in the Ionian philosophers, culminating in Socrates and Plato, and setting in motion a development worthy to run its course by the side of the great prophets of the pre-exilic and exilic period and destined to enter into the main stream lower down.

(2) The reinforcement of religion by philosophy meant much; but on its more proper ground religion assumed more intensive forms. The figure of Jeremiah is typical. In him the God-ward and the man-ward sides of the supernatural come out in increased degree. The religious life becomes more conscious of itself. We see the prophet in intimate communion and colloquy with the Almighty.

And when we pass over to the other side of the gap and take up the thread of enriched religious development starting from the Incarnation, the note of heightened self-consciousness still remains and, indeed, from that time onwards is never lost. St. Paul is an introspective genius. As a revelation of the inner life of religion his Letters are unrivalled. For those whose tendencies are at all similar they have served as models ever since.

(3) But these 'testimonies of the soul' are not confined to the great names of Christianity. They are just as characteristic of the rank and file. Indeed, there is no more distinctive note of a grace peculiarly Christian. The poet Cowper has provided it with

a name and description in his beautiful and touching hymn

'Oh! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame.'

There are other types of the religious life besides this. It is possible to be deeply religious without being self-conscious. The exemplar that our Lord Himself chose was that of the little child. Concentrated goodness is to be found in great, simple, manly forms whose virtues are active rather than passive. And Christian characters are made up of every variety of ingredient. But

'spirits are not finely touch'd
But to fine issues;'[1]

and where these are found, there is the true essence of Christianity.

On the whole I would say that, if it is desired to find a formula to describe summarily the relation to each other of the natural and the supernatural, of human effort and divine influence, it is not easy to improve upon those famous opening words of St. Augustine's *Confessions*: *Domine, fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.* It is a constant flow and return; and the two sides are really simultaneous; 'Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure'.

The Creeds.—I have already hinted at what I conceive to be the true position and function of the

[1] *Measure for Measure*, I. i. 35.

eds. Here, again, it ought to be possible to reach reasonable understanding, though as usually ducted the controversy is simply so much playing ross purposes. The high-churchman insists on ting from the Creeds as authorities. He measures opponent by them after the manner of a legal ument, making no allowance for the differences be- en past and present. Sometimes he condescends argue that by accepting the Articles the liberal himself declared the Creeds to be capable of proof certain warrants of holy Scripture', as though standards of scriptural proof remained the ie in the twentieth century as they were in the eenth. We have seen above how Mr. Tremen- re's admission holds out a hope of better things. liberal frankly does not start, and cannot start, n authority of any kind. But it by no means ows that he does not attach to the Creeds very siderable weight—not as authority but as ument. He recognizes in them great historical dmarks of continuity. It is to him no light matter t they embody the decisions of weighty majorities. hey only bore witness to the instinct of the Great irch of their day, even that would count for much. they really do more than this. The Greek hers represent an exactness of thought and a nness of logical acumen that is far in advance of rage English thinking of to-day. It is true that y are subject to certain drawbacks, due to change method. Allowance has to be made for this; but,

when it has been made, there remains a residuum which is by no means to be neglected. It is always open to us to try to translate the thought and language of the fourth or fifth century into the mental equivalents of the twentieth; but if, when that has been done, there is a clear contradiction of results, that may well be taken as a warning that the process of reasoning should be carefully gone over again. It may be said broadly that clear statement in an ecumenical creed supplies at least a strong *prima facie* case without claiming for it any sort of infallibility. In the last resort the argument must be conducted by the best methods of our own time.

An Example of Modern Correction.—The liberal is no fanatic. He is quite ready to do all the justice he can to the framers of ancient doctrine. He only stops short of allowing them to impose the weight of the 'dead hand' on Christian thought for all time.

Let me give an example in which not only liberals have made this claim. There has of late years been a widespread tendency to reopen some of the issues that seemed to be closed at the Fourth General Council at Chalcedon in 451 A.D. and in the weighty letter of Leo I to Flavian which preceded and exercised a determining influence upon it. But this tendency did not come in the first instance from the liberal side or from any spirit of revolt against authority. The first example known to me is an important passage in Dr. R. C. Moberly's *Atonement and Personality* p. 96 f.:

'It is really of considerable importance to rid our imaginations of a certain dualism (in its way somewhat parallel to the Nestorian dualism, though issuing from a very different side, and with a very different history and motive) according to which the Person of Christ is currently conceived as being in such a sense both God and man, that He is, in point of fact, two. There is Deity there, and there is also Humanity. He can speak, think, and act, sometimes under the conditions of one nature, sometimes under the conditions of the other. As God He does this; and as man He does that, and another thing partly as God, and partly as man.'

This is really very much the language used by Leo, though no direct reference is made to him. Dr. Moberly goes on:

'Assuredly no kind of irreverence was intended, nor any reality of dualism. Yet the language, on cross-examination, will be found to be largely dualistic. The phrase 'God and man' is of course perfectly true. But it is easy to lay undue emphasis on the 'and'. And when this is done, —as it is done every day,—the truth is better expressed by varying the phrase. 'He is not two, but one, Christ'. He is, then, not so much God *and* man, as God in, and through, and as, man. He is one indivisible personality throughout. In His human life on earth, as Incarnate, He is not sometimes, but consistently, always, in every act and every detail, Human. The Incarnate never leaves His Incarnation . . . . Whatever the reverence of their motive may be, men do harm to consistency and to truth, by keeping open, as it were, a sort of non-human sphere, or aspect, of the

> Incarnation. This opening we should unreservedly desire to close. There are not two existences either of, or within, the Incarnate, side by side with one another. If it is all Divine, it is all human too. We are to study the Divine, in and through the human. By looking for the Divine side by side with the human, instead of discerning the Divine within the human, we miss the significance of them both.'

It is worth while to study closely the wonderful exactness of this passage. It is the product of a mind unique in its generation.

I will mention two other works—a book and a booklet—which have contributed to the same effect, a criticism of Chalcedon and a revision of its contents. One is the massive and really classical work of Prof. H. R. Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ* (T. and T. Clark), especially pp. 292–299 ; and the other the brief but valuable tract by Canon Vernon F. Storr, *The Divinity of Christ* (one of the 'Liverpool Lectures').

These two writers between them point out considerations which prevent even the Chalcedonian formula from being final. Dr. Mackintosh shows how it still leaves open a very serious dilemma between 'the Scylla of a duplex personality and the Charybdis of an impersonal manhood' (which Dr. Moberly also rightly pronounces to be impossible). Both writers lay stress on a fundamental weakness —which is really a defect of the quality of the Greek mind—that in its prevailing intellectualism it treats

abstractions like 'nature', which have no meaning apart from personality, as though they were separate and independent entities.[1]

IV

The formula of Chalcedon did not really close once for all discussion about the Person of our Lord. What it may be held to have closed—along with the *perfectus deus perfectus homo* of the *Quicumque Vult*—is all question as to the reality of our Lord's human nature. Strange to say, the Bishop of Zanzibar *appears* (pp. 175-177) to throw doubt on this.

The truth is that he is so strong in his own sense of loyalty, and so eager to vindicate the full divinity of our Lord, that he lets drop the saving clauses which the Early Church was always careful to insert. I am afraid that this really affects the whole argument. Taken strictly at his word and severely pinned down to particular expressions, I am afraid it could be proved that Dr. Weston himself fell into the error, not only of the Docetae but also of Apollinaris and the Monophysites. Of course, I absolutely acquit him of the slightest intention of doing this. At the same time his own example shows how easily it may be done.

A still more innocent tendency suggests at least

[1] Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 295 f.; Storr, *op. cit.*, p. 21 f.

a word of warning. When he is speaking of the Lord Incarnate, Dr. Weston constantly follows a common practice by omitting the epithet. And yet, where accuracy is important, it is well—and sometimes even necessary—that it should be retained. We have seen that Dr. Moberly appropriately warns us that 'The Incarnate never leaves His Incarnation'. The Incarnation does certainly connote some limitations; and it is apt to put these out of sight if we say 'God' (*simpliciter*) when we mean 'God Incarnate'. Once more I am afraid that a good deal of Dr. Weston's argument is ruled out when this caution is borne in mind.

As I let myself dwell on the characteristics and some of the weaknesses of the Bishop of Zanzibar's book I find it easier to understand and account for them. It is 'an open pastoral letter' addressed to the European missionaries of the diocese, 'written during convalescence after influenza' while the author was waiting for a steamer. We are told further that it was written after twenty years of African service and 'at the end of a somewhat strenuous and unbroken four years' labour in the tropics'. These were, indeed, unfavourable conditions for the discharge of a task of so much importance—nothing less than an indictment of a whole party in the Church of England.

It is not surprising that a book composed under such conditions should be hardly adequate to the weight that it has to carry. It is hardly adequate

on either of its two sides—as a criticism on the one hand or as a constructive effort on the other.

All criticism should imply a certain amount of sympathy with the object criticized—at least enough to secure fairness and accuracy of statement. But fairness and accuracy are not easy to maintain without something of personal contact or without the habits of thought which ought to go along with them. I am afraid that I observe the same defects on both sides of the Bishop's procedure. He is much too fond of sweeping statements. He is too apt to drop out the qualifying clauses which are an integral part of his opponents' position and to omit them where they ought to be inserted in the statement of his own. There are other tendencies, which are apt to go along with this: in particular, fondness for *a priori* argument, where *a priori* argument is out of place or very precarious. I have often found myself asking whether Dr. Weston has not forgotten Bishop Butler.

What we derive from Bishop Butler is a rooted distrust of *a priori* reasoning; acquiescence in the fact that what we have to explain, and the foundation on which we have to build is the world as it is—not as we should wish it to be, or as we think it ought to be, but as it actually is. Bishop Butler's is a speculative system, and it is worked out as a speculative system. But there is also a moral attitude corresponding to it, which finds expression in that most wonderful Psalm, the hundred and

thirty-first. I quote it in the familiar Prayer Book form.

> 'Lord, I am not high-minded : I have no proud looks.
>
> I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me.
>
> But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother: yea, my soul is even as a weaned child.'

I would venture to say that the use which the Bishop of Zanzibar has made of *a priori* reasoning is in itself sufficient to invalidate his conclusions.

The mention that has been made of Bishop Butler suggests that it may be right to interpolate here another incidental remark. The Bishop of Zanzibar and some others bring against us as a party the charge of Germanizing. I believe that the extent to which this charge holds good is really very small. I should very much wish to do justice to what I owe to Germany, and my admiration for what the Germans have done—apart from the special element which has brought about their downfall—is great. But I also know enough of the history of my own thinking to know that its main lines have been independent. I should be sure of this, if only from my knowledge of the part which Bishop Butler has had in determining them. He is the one philosopher who has been with me all through my career, from my school days—and I count it a special piece of good fortune that my attention was directed to him in my school days—until now. I would say

that Hooker and Butler are the most genuinely British theologians we have had; and they remain so still.

V

And now, finally, I must try to explain what liberalism really stands for. It stands fundamentally for what I have called elsewhere 'the unification of thought'. The liberal feels that he cannot at any point stop short of this. It is the same mind that has to think of things secular and of things sacred, and the processes of thinking for both are the same. What are called the laws of thought are applicable alike to both.

This does not prevent spiritual things from being spiritually discerned. The conditions of spiritual discernment are a state not only of thought but of feeling. There are rights reserved in each of the two spheres; but these do not conflict with each other. Each respects the other's province.

Unification of thought means unification of life. It means that the universe is all of a piece; it means that life from the beginning has been in essence just what we see it around us to-day.

We do not need elaborate argument to prove this. We are sure of it by a sort of intuition. If we are compelled to analyse that intuition, probably the best account of it would be that to assume that it is so is the simplest explanation of the universe.

A typical issue was fought out on the field of Geology. In the early stages of the science there had been two schools: one contending that the phenomena were to be accounted for by a series of great convulsions or catastrophes; the other assuming that the same sort of causes had been at work in the past, and in the same sort of way as that in which we see them at work to-day. This was known as the 'uniformitarian' principle, and it was the watchword of the uniformitarian school.

In this country it is associated especially with the name of Sir Charles Lyell, whose *Principles of Geology* was published in the years 1830–1833. The result now lies behind us. The principle is a common presupposition of all science. It is assumed that as far as we can go back in space or time the same factors have been at work that are operative to-day. Another way of putting it is to assert, both backwards and forwards, the universal reign of law.

The only question is whether we are to make a single large exception in the interests of religion. Are we, in that one case, to mark off a solitary Land of Goshen in the history of the past? If not, what are we to say of Miracle? This is the one crucial question, which brings to a head and includes all the rest.

My own view has been briefly sketched above. I believe that we can still retain the conception of

Miracle if we are prepared to modify its current meaning: if, that is, we are prepared to regard it as no longer involving a breach or suspension of natural law. I believe that, on these terms, it is possible for us to write, or rewrite, the History of Religion in such a way as to bring it into line with every other branch or form of History. That, I conceive, is the one step that is needed to put the final crown on the unification of thought and of life.

Miracle, in the old sense, I believe belongs not so much to the facts as to the record of the facts. It is perfectly true that those who wrote the history as it has come down to us accepted the old idea of Miracle, and took it for granted that those who came after them would continue to accept it. But the world has outgrown them. On this one point they will submit to correction. The language of Miracle, in this sense, was just a dialect or mode of speech in which they clothed their conception of what happened. It is a feature in their conception which has proved to be detachable. For some time past it has been confined to the New Testament. It has been gradually eliminated from the Old Testament and from all external history, and the question is whether the process of elimination can at this point be arrested. I do not think it can. Neither do I think that we ought to wish that it could. To me it seems to remove the last great difficulty.

The chief reason for reluctance to accept this explanation has been that the old idea has been thought to be bound up with the innermost secret of religion. That was naturally enough to justify a prolonged stand in opposition. The stand has been prolonged even at the cost of postponing the complete unification of thought and life.

Others will probably still remain of that opinion. But, for myself, I am prepared to let it go: chiefly because I believe that, if it is let go, Religion is not affected at all.

What is the most certain thing in the world? The answer is clear: my own consciousness. I must say 'my own', in order to bring out its immediacy and ultimateness. But more strictly: My own consciousness, so far as it is normal; so far, that is, as it can be compared with the consciousnesses of other beings similarly constituted, and we can generalize from them. We project this common consciousness backward into the immemorial past, and we project it forward into the indefinite future. As a matter of fact, the extent of the projection is limited by common sense. We do not, if we are wise, carry it beyond what is necessary for our purposes; and the purposes of men differ. The philosophers must set us an example; they are called upon to go furthest.

Also we have to remind ourselves that the processes of inference need to be very carefully watched. The interpretation of consciousness needs to be

carried out in a responsible manner. Again, it is for the philosophers to set the example to ordinary men.

It is subject to these conditions that I speak of our own consciousness as the most certain starting-point that we have. It is the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes — or rather, *like* that famous dictum though not identical with it. Strictly, we should suspend the *ergo sum*, and complete the sentence according to the line of inquiry that we are pursuing.

My own belief is that if consciousness is interpreted normally, its verdicts will also be normal. Its most summary verdict I believe is, that there is in the world and has been all through *a co-operation of God and man.* We must keep open human free-will, and we must also keep open divine overruling.

Within the limits that are thus imposed I believe that most of the great questions are to be answered in a liberal sense; in the sense practically that has been sketched in this pamphlet. I am afraid that I cannot at all accept the Bishop of Zanzibar's statement of the liberal position in chapters II, III, IV of his book. I cannot accept it as true in fact. The Bishop doubtless intends it to be true, and believes it to be true; but he has been placed at such disadvantage by his isolation in Zanzibar that his best intentions have been frustrated.

This is notably the case with the brief paragraph relating to the Old Testament.

> 'The liberal rationalist cannot approach God along this old path. He has so criticized the Old Testament that he finds in it little else than men's thoughts about God. He therefore concludes that his own knowledge of God must be evolved from within his own mind and spiritual experience. He expects nothing "from above", as we say' (p. 17).

I cannot help asking, on what work or works is this description founded? It does not remotely resemble the contents or tendency of any with which I am acquainted. Our leading writers on the Old Testament have been those whom I have already mentioned: A. B. Davidson, W. Robertson Smith, T. K. Cheyne and S. R. Driver. Not one of these has been in the least inclined to minimize the Divine part in the history of the Old Testament Revelation.[1] And their successors at the present day are no otherwise minded. Indeed, they are in some ways more rather than less conservative.

It happens that I have of late been engaged, with two colleagues, on a series of Notes on the new Table of Lessons, intended to popularize the results of the best scholarship, and to help the intelligent following of the Scriptures as they are read in church. The Lessons from the Old Testament have been entirely in the hands of my colleague

[1] See also the note on p. 15 above.

Dr. C. F. Burney, Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scriptures; and I have been much struck by the consistent way in which he has carried out a view of the Old Testament which is as far removed as possible from the (so-called) 'liberal rationalism' of the extract. Dr. Burney would, I know, disclaim any such label; but he is really an example of what I have said above as to the solidarity which at present characterizes Old Testament studies.

I have been led to touch upon these because I was intending to suggest that, in the present balance of opinion, it seemed to be a good method to pursue to start rather from the Old Testament than from the New. A point has been reached where the Old Testament is considerably less a subject for controversy. There is a large measure of consent behind all the scholarly investigation that has been brought to bear upon it. I have done my best to follow this, if somewhat from without; and I know that I should yield to no one in the wish to emphasize the divine guidance and control of the whole course of revelation, and especially of this earlier portion of it which is the foundation for the rest.

I am prepared to regard the main points on which I should be at issue with the Bishop of Zanzibar as open questions. And I should be quite in favour of approaching the closer study of them solidly and systematically. It is for that reason that I have laid the stress I have done on the Old Testament.

I fully believe that it will be a great advantage to come to the questions which still lie before us with minds thoroughly saturated with the Old Testament—and with the Old Testament not as standing alone but in the momentous place which it occupies in the history of the dealings of God with man.

VI

A strange thing has happened to me. I might almost have stopped at the end of the last section, but the fates have ordered otherwise. It was a sudden resolution which led me to write this pamphlet; and another sudden resolution tells me how it must end. I must tell the story of its composition; and, in telling that story, I must do something more: I must render an account of my stewardship. I think I *can* do it, and therefore I will! *Voila tout!*

A few words, first, by way of explanation. Whether it is a confession of weakness or not, I do not know. Whether the mere fact of the confession is a weakness or not, I do not know. I shall not stay to inquire.

I am so constituted as to take a certain pleasure in two things. It is always a special pleasure when I can reduce a complicated experience or a complicated problem to really simple expression—when I can sum up in few words, and those by preference

words of one syllable. And then further: I am rather given to self-analysis. It is another pleasure to me when I can trace the concatenation of my own thoughts. Again, I will not stay to ask whether this is or is not quite as it should be; whether or not it is egotism, and reprehensible egotism. The impulse is there, and at least on this occasion I will follow it.

I believe it was on July 5 that the Bishop of Zanzibar's book came into my hands. I skimmed it rather hastily, and it struck me as formidable. I took it as an indictment of liberalism, and I understood that in that sense the subject of it was to be brought forward at the Lambeth Conference. In consequence, I wrote a letter to *The Times*, which was inserted in the issue of July 8, begging the members of the Conference to suspend their judgement upon it till it could be answered. This brought me in reply a letter from the Bishop of Zanzibar, and some other letters in the next day or two from other friends. From these I learnt that I was mistaken in the impression I had received; that the subject was not down on the agenda of the Conference; and, therefore, that there was no urgency about it and that it did not need to be treated controversially.

All this I was glad to hear; and, again by the kindness of the Editor of *The Times*, I was allowed to explain what had happened. The question before me was whether at that point I should let

the whole matter drop. My first impulse was to do so; but by the advice of a very dear friend, whom I also regard as very wise, I decided to go on. The result so far (up to July 30) is the pamphlet as it is written. I had already intended to add one more section, giving it a more personal turn. I had said practically what I had to say in statement and defence of the liberal position. But I also thought it incumbent on me to add—what had been coming home to me more and more during the last twelve months or so since I delivered the short course of valedictory lectures, which have since been published under the title *Divine Overruling* (T. & T. Clark)—that, so far as I was myself concerned, this statement and defence (whatever it may be worth) may be regarded as a sort of *Nunc dimittis*. The position that I have reached, such as it is, is one that satisfies me. It is a mere outline I know full well; but I do not aim at more than an outline; that is all that is needed by my habits of thought.

I wish to say this. There might be some of my friends who would be interested to know it. I feel that the days of my intellectual pilgrimage are over. For good or for ill, I believe that I have found as much in the way of general principle as I could expect to find. My barque has sailed into port. Whatever may happen to the body, the mind at least is at rest. There are no inner contradictions.

How much that may mean is another question. I repeat that the result is the merest outline. For years I have felt that I have been trying (as I put it to myself) 'to make both ends meet'; and now I feel that, so far as it is in my power to make them, they have met.

I gave something of a sketch of my own mental history in *Divine Overruling*, p. 62 f. I mentioned there that the year 1912 had been rather a turning-point for me. I came then to the conclusion I have formed on the subject of Miracle. Many people will condemn it; but there it is. For myself, I am satisfied; and all the rest fits in.

I might easily enlarge upon this; but it is not necessary. The remaining space that I am prepared to allow myself will be better filled in another way. As I lay awake in the early hours this morning (July 30) it occurred to me that an opportunity for which I had been looking had at last come.

There is another great explanation that I owe especially to one of my publishers. I think, now, that in a manner I can give it.

Roughly speaking, I should say at a guess that it may be about thirty years ago that I told the editors of *The International Theological Library* that I would try to contribute to their series a Life of our Lord. That is, as of course I understood from the first, what is commonly meant by a book that is called by that name. Was it not Renan who said that the Life of our Lord has been written once

for all in the Four Gospels, and that whoever thinks that he could do it better does not understand them? Of course that is absolutely true. When we speak of 'A Life of our Lord' we mean a particular form of literature with a recognized conventional content. That is what I undertook to try to write. I knew very well that the task would be in any case far beyond me; but I hardly knew how far. I hardly knew how far it was even *physically* beyond me. If I had had two lives I could perhaps have done something. I have done a certain amount—not at the book but in preparation for the book. That is all. Sunday next (August 1) is my seventy-seventh birthday.

I am in the confessional; but I do not want to make a long story of it. I shall not try to excuse myself; though there is doubtless much that needs excuse. I shall just try to state facts, and leave them where they are. In a sense, as I said, the greater part of what I have done in the last twenty or five-and-twenty years might be described as preparation for the great work. First there was the article in vol. III of Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, which came out in 1899 and may be taken as a rough draft for the greater work, and was reprinted as *Outlines of the Life of Christ* in 1905 and onwards. In 1902 I paid a short visit to Palestine, and published *Sacred Sites of the Gospels* in the next year. In 1904 I lectured on the Fourth Gospel in New York. In 1907 I published some

lectures on *The Life of Christ in Recent Research;* in 1910, *Christologies, Ancient and Modern,* with a supplement *Personality in Christ and in Ourselves* in 1911. In the same year I edited *Studies in the Synoptic Problem,* representing the work of a Seminar which I had conducted. Then came the War, and I digressed into pamphlets about it. I have said that the year 1912 was a turning-point in my thought on the subject of Miracle. This was explained in my reply to Dr. Gore, *Bishop Gore's Challenge to Criticism* (Longmans, 1914). Last year there were printed my farewell lectures, with the title *Divine Overruling* (T. & T. Clark).

I hope it will not be thought that I am making a parade of these publications, such as they are. Anything of the kind is far from my mind. I would only quote them to show that, if I have not been writing on my main subject, I have at least been writing *round* it. The upshot of it all is that, as I have just been saying, I feel as if I had at last cleared the ground, and should have been prepared to write if there had been time to do so. But I must not raise any false expectations. My real working days are practically over. I am no longer capable of a work of real learning.[1] I greatly hope that a friend who is capable of it will take it out of my hands.

I have spoken in the course of my confessions

[1] Real learning requires a certain capacity of brain, which I have never possessed.

of the habit that I have of trying, wherever it is possible, to reduce an experience or a problem to a single brief formula. I do not mean to deprecate well-merited criticism by saying that in some small degree I can, perhaps, succeed in doing that. To my book on Recent Research there is prefixed as frontispiece a reproduction of a portion of a picture in a private collection 'The Temptation in the Wilderness' by W. Dyce, R.A. (1806–1864). I very much believe in a method that might be called in ordinary matters *ex pede Herculem.* I regard this picture as presenting to the eye the most satisfactory summing up of the Life of our Lord on earth. I believe it to have been *all like that.*

Dr. Sanday died on Thursday, September 16, 1920, while this work was being put into type.

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